

July 11, 2005

As the Long Term Care Coordinator for AARP – Kansas I am presenting some of the national and state level initiatives of AARP that relate to the theme of the White House Conference on Aging: The Dynamics of Aging: From Awareness to Action.

Members and non-members of AARP consistently identify health and well being as one of their top concerns. This includes staying healthy for as long as possible, the affordability of health care and the quality of health and long-term care services. Although AARP has worked to reduce the burden of health care costs on American families the increasing costs continue to outstrip our efforts. In addition there is still a large population with no or inadequate coverage.

Many factors influence the way people age and their overall health status. Following are several that AARP recognizes in their strategic plan for the next several years. These are:

- the ability to maintain independence as long as possible;
- adequate housing options;
- safety in our homes as we age;
- locating affordable, high quality home based services in our community when we need them;
- a transportation service that is available to us;
- support for the family caregivers who provide most of the care of the elderly members of our families;
- the availability of appropriate, high quality long-term care if and when needed
- a coordinated system of comprehensive planning, coordination, and budgeting to reduce redundant services and confusion; and
- the need for rules and regulations that guide the deliberations of federal and state policymakers and lawmakers as we seek to achieve long term care reform – a Long Term Care Bill of Rights.

AARP Kansas believes that integrated solutions are needed to address the full range of problems in providing health and long- term care, including supportive services. The solutions require a financially sound Medicare program, a stable and affordable health care system, high quality health care products, and community services that enable everyone, regardless of income, to get the care needed in a timely manner.

The availability of community based services will be the basis for achieving these goals. More importantly, we need to develop a system with home and community based services as the focus, available to all who need them, and a communication network that can be accessed by the families, regardless of income, who need the services.

AARP Kansas is also committed to working with consumers, providers and legislators as we struggle with the problems of financing the kind of service delivery system that is needed in Kansas. We believe that a unified "aging" budget will help in both identifying service gaps and in a more efficient funding plan. Presently we lack long term care planning and budgeting coordination. The cost of aging programs and services is not collected by age across state agencies nor does Kansas develop a seniors' or LTC budget. AARP's position is that consolidated budget information is crucial for effective state planning to meet the needs of Kansas' seniors and could lead to more efficient use of state resources.

First Kansas must move forward with a Long Term Care Bill of Rights to use as a basis for decision making as consumers, providers and lawmakers plan and develop a better and more inclusive system. The AARP-Kansas position states: **AARP Kansas will promote rules and regulations that will guide the deliberations of state policy makers and lawmakers in achieving meaningful long term care reform for seniors and people with disabilities in Kansas.**

AARP will continue to advocate at the national and state levels to ensure that all persons, as they age, will have access to a wide range of affordable, high quality health and supportive services, including affordable health and long-term care coverage options. This will also include assisting in improving quality standards and practices in health and long term care delivery. Many AARP volunteers are committed to extend and support the delivery of health and long term care services in our communities.

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